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ABSTRACT

Laboratory education is discussed from three viewpoints: (1) as an instrument for adult resocialization, (2) as an educational challenge which promotes personal but not social reconstruction, and (3) as a value medium which operates against the intellectual and independence modes. Criticism is focused on what the laboratory education technique does not do and for what it overlooks rather than its power. In a section on a typology of forces for adult resocialization, four forces which may serve as catalytic agents for adult crisis are discussed. These forces are: cultural transition, critical social interaction, personal crux, and/or educational challenge. Alternative adult responses to situational change include readaptation and social reintegration, alienation and social isolation, or major adult development or change. Sensitivity training teaches task-oriented conformity, with little consideration given to the importance of educating people to stand up for their principles or beliefs. Intellect and independence are not encouraged in sensitivity training. Consequently, sensitivity training should review its own purposes and direction in a society aimed toward control, manipulation, ideological confusion, and what has been termed "eternal verities." (JS)

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D I S C U S S I O N D R A F T

T AND SENSITIVITY: A CRITIQUE OF LAB EDUCATION

by

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T AND SENSITIVITY: A CRITIQUE OF LAB EDUCATION

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Introduction

In this paper, I discuss Laboratory Education as an instrument for adult re-socialization, as an educational challenge which promotes personal but not social reconstruction, and as a value-medium which operates against the intellectual and independence modes.

The following critique, however, is not meant to minimize the effectiveness of Lab Education. There is no question herein as to the power of the technique; on the contrary, it is exactly the power of the technique that has led me to the position expressed in this paper.

It is important to state my own bias regarding an educative technique that aims to provide "a learning environment centered upon personal, interpersonal, group or organizational problems, in which the participants can learn and change through an inductive process based on experience."[1] Learning to participate effectively in social interaction, after all, is a valid and important asset. This social learning, which helps people participate as more or less effective members of groups and society, cannot be criticized for what it does. It can be criticized, I believe, for what it does not do and for what it overlooks.

My view is that personal reconstruction (development or change) which

does not lead to social reconstruction is essentially concerned by its very nature with furtherance of the same old mode, the status quo, a furtherance albeit at an accelerated or more efficient pace. Such personal reconstruction aims at fitting people better into social norms and value standards and not with differences in social behavior nor with social change and value reconsideration. Consequently, such personal reconstruction wittingly or unwittingly seeks to maintain fundamental social structures, norms and values. My position is that, in a world of increasing technological, institutional and governmental control which at the same time suffers from diminishing social interest and participation, adult re-socialization techniques should be used to encourage individual conviction and active concern with respect to political and organizational change rather than to promote cohesive mechanisms that encourage conformity to, and preservation of, extant social hierarchy and power. Unity must come from the continuing mutual struggle to improve society and to reduce its evils and prejudices rather than from the comfortable feelings of social acceptance and of belonging to a group. The sense of belongingness, I would argue, is an important variable in man's theoretical hierarchy of needs.[2] Nevertheless, it is more important for a person to understand, to be conscious of, what he or she is belonging to, why, what the implications are, as well as when it may be necessary to risk the comfort of that belonging for what we call a higher principle, a tenet that gives more meaning to the "here and now" than the mere satisfaction and tension-reduction of social approval.

The T-group, as Blumberg notes, is "such a powerful vehicle for social learning that it absorbs the major portion of most participants' emotional energy during the lab."[3] This is a good observation and explicitly recognizes the socialization, or re-socialization, aspects of sensitivity training. What essentially happens in a T-group or sensitivity training, at its best, is that conflict is reduced and the energy that was bound up in the conflict is freed for investment in goal-directed, task-oriented activity. Despite arguments to the contrary,[4] the T in T-group stands as much for normative <u>therapy</u> as for interrelational <u>training</u>. In brief, unconscious

conflict is seen by Lab trainers as a negative ingredient in personal and interpersonal relations and is weeded out, sensitized out. The importance of inner conflict with respect to social evolution and human development is basically ignored. Little consideration is given to the importance of educating people to be passionately concerned enought to enter into social conflict for some principle or belief. In other words, what is taught is task-oriented conformity and efficiency rather than the independence, gumption and character to brave group conformity and the ability to question the meaning of tasks that may be economically advisable but socially immoral.

My position will be made clearer, I hope, if I first outline a typology of forces for adult re-socialization (including laboratory education) and chart the alternative adult responses to situational change.

I.

A Typology of Forces for Adult Re-Socialization

The self seeks a satisfying social relationship and a well-supported self system. Nevertheless, the culturally determined social responses learned by an individual during the early years may not be adequate in new environments or under unexpected pressures.

There are various forces which may serve as catalytic agents for adult crisis. These forces result in a re-socialization process. Stressful or self-concept challenging situations occur in life which may be responded to differently by different adults; and these responses may be seen as positive, neutral or negative. To begin, however, I should like to enumerate the four primary forces, or catalysts, for adult re-socialization; then I will discuss the three main types of response, or reaction to, these catalytic forces. The four forces are: 1) cultural transition, 2) critical social interaction, 3) personal crux, and/or 4) educational challenge. Transition, interaction, crux and educational challenge create "a situation" in which,

depending on personal goals, needs and resources, and personality structure, an individual may go through a change, an assimilation and accommodation that re-determines his life and affects his previous life strategy.

The four major forces for re-socialization cited above may be further delineated as follows:

Cultural transition:
- a) rural to urban area
- b) migration to new country
- c) career shift
- d) social status shift

Critical social interaction:
- a) social conflict
- b) social institutionalization
- c) brainwashing

Personal crux:
- a) physical accident
- b) familial loss
- c) responsibility shift
- d) religious experience
- e) age crisis

Educational challenge:
- a) motivational (management training, organizational development, sensitivity training)
- b) maturational ("awakening" experience, psychotherapy)
- c) perceptual (political literacy, "conscientizacão," self-reliance training)

This outline is not meant to be exhaustive; neither is it meant to separate so much as to highlight.[5]

Cultural Transition

In an age of increasing mobility, cultural transition is a major force for re-socialization. Geographical, occupational and social transitions are perhaps the most pervasive and natural influences for assimilation and accommodation. (Accommodation, of course, may result in maladjustment. "The modern world of economic competition and shifting social relations," as Stonequist[6] wrote in the '30's, "places the individual in a situation where change and uncertainty are the keynotes. Fixed or permanent adjustment become impossible. The world moves and the individual continually adjusts himself. The possibility that he will not do this with complete success is greater than ever before. Social maladjustment, whether slight or great, then becomes characteristic of modern man.")

Environmental change and uncertainty are significant factors for bringing about perceptual adjustment and role change and, to a greater or lesser degree, personality modification.

Geographical transition (from rural to urban area or from one country to another in terms of a permanent transition) is perhaps the force for re-socialization that is most recognized as such by writers, policy-makers and education program directors. The language-cum-citizenship programs in countries across the globe are concerned with influencing the new arrival to adopt the mores and attitudes of the specific country. (The importance of language in changing individual psychology should not be overlooked.[7] Language, whether a second language or additional language, is an important facilitator of re-socialization and its concomitant psychological change.)

Occupational shift is also a kind of cultural transition. This shift refers to "upward mobility" as well as to loss or leaving of one job for a totally (or considerably) different job. In the latter example especially, although the language and general outside environment may remain the same,

the work and working relationship (where, after all, individuals expend a great deal, if not most, of their mental and physical energy) will be so distinct as to represent in many respects a new cultural environment. This is true also of social-status shift, the moving from one rung of society to another; for examples, in India the marriage of a person from one caste to a person from another, the parvenu shift from lower to middle or middle to upper class in the United States, or the education of a tribal youth away from tribal customs in Africa.

Critical Social Interaction

Critical social interaction is a distinct force in and of itself. Social interaction as referred to here usually involves some kind of cultural or racial conflict between the dominant society and the individual. (What results has been cogently related by Stonequist in The Marginal Man. The marginal man either: 1) assimilates into the dominant group, 2) assimilates into the subordinate group, or 3) finds some form of "intermediary" position, or accommodation, between the two groups. This is particularly true for what Stonequist calls "racial hybrids" and "cultural hybrids.")

Critical social interaction, however, may be of a different kind than that resulting from a cultural transition or conflict. For example, persons who are imprisoned go through a re-socialization process (for better or for worse) provoked by total institutionalization. This would be true also for persons who are totally hospitalized or committed to mental institutions. The institutional arrangement and its rules and procedures then become the central and guiding influence (for good or for bad) on the individual.

Brainwashing is a kind of total institutionalization. It molds a person by coercing, persuading, and convincing the person of the "rightness" or "appropriateness" of one thing, idea, or way-of-being. Overt brainwashing (indoctrination) and covert brainwashing (TV advertising) both aim to instill

automatic responses on the part of the individual. It is, perhaps, the most obvious and morally disapproved aspect of the power of conditioning as a learning process.

Personal Crux

Personal crux may come about from far too many causes to list and elaborate on here. I have chosen five: physical accident, familial loss, responsibility shift, religious experience and age crisis. All of these circumstances provoke accommodation and may even result in an alternation or transformation on the part of the individual. The loss of an arm or leg may totally affect a person. Rehabilitation programs are specifically set up to deal with such crises, to help the individual to "readjust" to his loss. The loss of a wife or a husband, or a child, may spark a trauma that causes a complete review of self and self in society. A "responsibility shift" may be related to the above, but it is also an independent influence. A new job position, or retirement, for example, may cause significant change in attitude and responses on the part of an individual. With role readjustment comes usually a significant perceptual change.

Religious experiences and age crises touch on areas of the mind and its relationship to the environment that are highly complex. At best, they may be seen as "awakenings" by an individual to perceptions in him that were repressed or ignored. The religious experience results in a perceptual change that may result in a transformation of the individual. Age crisis has to do mainly with the sense of time passing, time running out, and of a sense of urgency, or waste, and may catalyze new perceptions and accommodations, or new strategies, to deal with actualities.

It is assumed herein, with Goslin,[8] that as individuals age, their behavior becomes less dependent on external control and more based on internalized dispositions.

Educational Challenge

An educational challenge for an adult may take different forms. The [illegible]e I have listed represent the major instrumental challenges which may b[illegible]g on adult development or adult change.

Motivational (drive) acceleration and enhancement of achievement needs[9] is the educational challenge that pertains most to lab education. By means of a learning environment centered on group and organizational problems, or by means of a McClelland-type psychological training, an individual becomes more goal-directed and achievement-motivated.

Maturational development (identity consolidation, psychic growth) may come about through some kind of "awakening" experience and is usually associated with psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. As with sensitivity training, much of the object of psychoanalysis is to reduce conflict so that bound-up energies can be released for more productive goals. Here, as with sensitivity, the question concerns inner or unconscious conflict. In this regard, I cannot resist quoting from Wheelis' The Quest for Identity:

> No one is altogether free of unconscious conflict, and to the extent that it is present and can be analyzed, transference can be resolved or diminished. In these days, however, more and more often the aspirations directed toward the analyst are the product, not of unconscious conflict, but of the loss of the eternal verities which formerly bound these aspirations. . . . (P)sychology does not surmount culture, but is part of it. It provides no escape from culturally determined problems.[10]

The work of Paulo Freire and Rubem Alvez to foster cultural and political literacy by means of the first two "r's" (reading and writing) is an example of the kind of educational challenge which may provoke perceptual change, a rational mind-shift, and a consequent life-change or, as connectionist theorists would say, a behavioral change. "Conscientização" means political-ideological consciousness and, as used by Freire,[11] aims to awake people to

the political and social realities to which they are inured and by which they have been oppressed. This kind of educational challenge, albeit more appealing to minority groups and those without power, is nevertheless a challenge which might readily be presented to those of the socially introverted middle-class.

II.

Alternative Adult Responses to Situational Change

A person in a society who undergoes a situational change--a cultural shift, a social conflict, a personal crisis, and/or an educational challenge--will respond in one of three ways. The first and most "normal" (i.e., expected and socially approved) response is: readaptation and social re-integration. The adult goes through the experience of one form or another of situational change, may undergo certain peripheral insights or misgivings or newly sparked personal aspirations, but then settles back into "the same old person" always known and who can be relied on to act as in the past. Most of our social-welfare, immigration, rehabilitation, and other social-educational institutions have re-adaptation or assimilation and accommodation as primary goals for the individual.

The second, but negative, kind of response that may be given by an adult to a situational change is: alienation and social isolation. The person finds the new circumstances or position to be too threatening or difficult to cope with, either externally or internally, and retreats from meaningful participation in social and political processes. To a degree, many of the existing middle-class survive in social isolation, although they are not alienated in any obvious way from the social values and norms that are given lip-service in society. In terms of actuality and action, the larger symbols of society have no meaningful reality for them.

Finally, there is a response to situational change which involves major

adult development or adult change. (See Chart) On the side of adult development, there are those who undergo what may be called late maturation, those who may have had minimal identity diffusion[12] and are at long last able to consolidate their forces. Also, those who experience motivational acceleration or enhanced need for achievement may be said to have gone through a developmental stage involving modification of life style.

With respect to adult change, there are two sorts, one which may be termed rational and the other non-rational, or revelatory. Rational mind-shifts are those which involve a heightening of consciousness and insight to the point where the person sees, and subsequently acts, differently, with different objectives and orientations in mind. The non-rational kind of mind-shift is that which is thought of as resulting from a religious experience, a conversion or revelation.

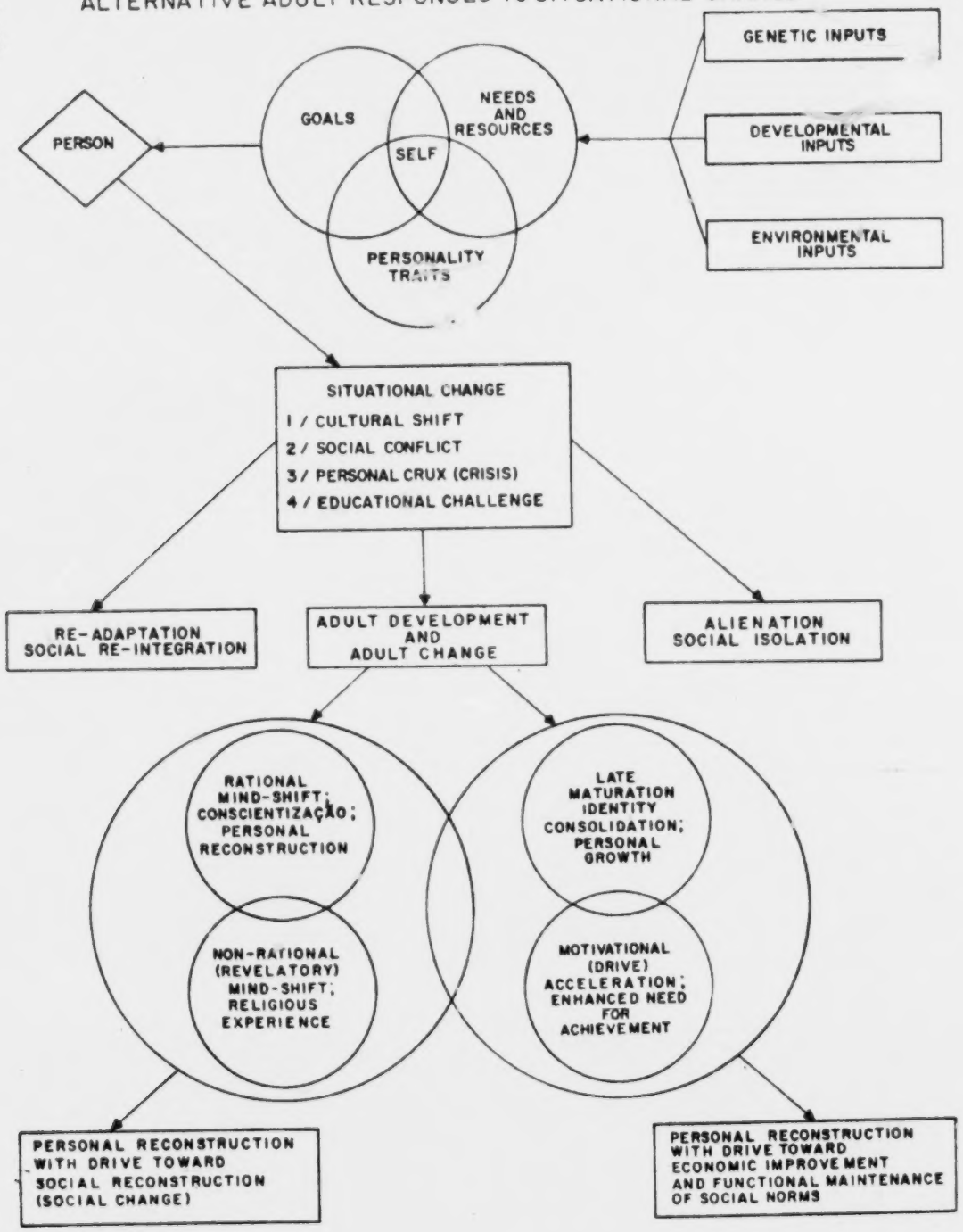
These three alternative responses (re-adaptation, alienation, or adult development/adult change) are valuable for the present analysis because they show a relationship that is quite telling. Adult re-adaptation and adult (motivational) development may be said to share the same value-orientation while adult (rational) change may be linked to that of social isolation or peripheralness in the sense that strong positions in society (unless or until they become acceptable) are usually isolating either temporarily or permanently. It would seem clear, from this analysis, why adult change is so seldom pursued in a reasonably stable society: it involves non-conformity, social conflict (meaning inter-personal conflict), and individual or group independence.

III.

Intellect and Independence

There is a great deal of talk in laboratory training and in sensitivity literature about anxiety and defensiveness as factors limiting the capacity

ALTERNATIVE ADULT RESPONSES TO SITUATIONAL CHANGE


GENETIC INPUTS
DEVELOPMENTAL INPUTS
ENVIRONMENTAL INPUTS
PERSON
GOALS
NEEDS AND RESOURCES
SELF
PERSONALITY TRAITS
SITUATIONAL CHANGE
1 / CULTURAL SHIFT
2 / SOCIAL CONFLICT
3 / PERSONAL CRUX (CRISIS)
4 / EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGE
RE-ADAPTATION SOCIAL RE-INTEGRATION
ADULT DEVELOPMENT AND ADULT CHANGE
ALIENATION SOCIAL ISOLATION
RATIONAL MIND-SHIFT; CONSCIENTIZAÇÃO; PERSONAL RECONSTRUCTION
NON-RATIONAL (REVELATORY) MIND-SHIFT; RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE
LATE MATURATION IDENTITY CONSOLIDATION; PERSONAL GROWTH
MOTIVATIONAL (DRIVE) ACCELERATION; ENHANCED NEED FOR ACHIEVEMENT
PERSONAL RECONSTRUCTION WITH DRIVE TOWARD SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION (SOCIAL CHANGE)
PERSONAL RECONSTRUCTION WITH DRIVE TOWARD ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT AND FUNCTIONAL MAINTENANCE OF SOCIAL NORMS

10–A

of individuals to experience the world and interrelate effectively. The constraints on the individual and his or her attitudes toward the physical and social environment are emphasized often to the detriment, or neglect, of cognitive intellectual development.

To prove that such is the case regarding the cognitive, all that has to be done is to try and pursue an intellectual train of thought within a T group or sensitivity group. Sensitivity groups do not easily tolerate the abstract, the intellectual, the "there and then." Everything is "here and now."

There is much to say for a "here and now" philosophy, especially from a psychological viewpoint. If coping with the future in the mind or the past in the mind creates unproductive tension and depressive psychic stress, then the problem becomes one of coping with the present. Also, as Social Psychologists Mead, Sullivan, Lewin and many others have argued, reality is always in the present. And yet, the present reality carries with it an accumulation of personal history and experience as well as future-oriented directions, aspirations, fears, hopes. This coming together of an individual's attitudes toward, and interpretation of, the past and the future is what gives the present moment its meaning. Otherwise, the present is a continuing series of differing emotional events without any pattern, without any "rhyme or reason."

What does give the present moment a meaning is either the extent to which it contributes to a socially approved or disapproved personalized purpose or the extent to which it provides satisfactions of a re-creational nature (meaning active or passive relaxation). Consequently, the here-and-now has no meaning, other than that of survival or existence, outside of the frame of there-and-then, of past and future. Otherwise, there is no identity, i.e., other than animal identity.

Man (Woman) is an animal, and the animal identity with the present, the "phenomenological" present, is not to be underestimated. A person who

overspeeds in a car to reach a personally and socially important meeting and gets killed in the process has over-emphasized the future to the point of losing a sense of present danger. A person who becomes incensed as a result of a conflict or contretemps and blindly walks into a manhole has literally "lost sight" of the moment. On the other hand, it is practically inconceivable to imagine a person whose present exists independent of past or future.

But what is the past but images and symbols? And the interpretation of these images and symbols into patterns of thought and behavior make up present meaning. The way a person "feels" about these images and symbols and their patterns determines who he is and what he must do in the present. The present, in other words, is the most immediate reality. It is the reality which is constructed from and constructs the values of the past and future and, consequently, is a product of thoughts and actions accomplished and unaccomplished. The here-and-now, in other words, is composed of an economic, social, educational, and political as well as a psychological present.

What laboratory training does is to give insights into the ways in which we interrelate and why. The so-called "growth group," as we know, helps a person:

1) gain perspective on his own experience (and to see that his own experiences are shared by others);
2) gain greater accuracy and range of self-perception (and ability to get in touch with self and recognize fears and anger);
3) gain information about the self as seen by other people in the group;
4) gain more differentiated and accurate perception of others;
5) gain ability to acquire and gather more information from others as well as from self;
6) gain accuracy and range of perspective of the immediate environment.[13]

These are important gains. They are essential for effective interpersonal relations and task-oriented organizational development. They are gains that make particular sense within the framework of a production-oriented group or a socio-cultural group which is concerned with consensus about morals rather than with pluralism. There are, however, political as well as cultural dimensions here that are not usually dealt with when the gains from lab training are enumerated.

While lab training gives insights into the ways in which we interrelate and why we interrelate the way we do, the insights are in terms of self's perception of self and others and the environment in a given situation. The situation, however, is usually one which emphasizes the image of community, of cohesiveness, of mutual and positive support. The situation, moreover, becomes one in which the group is closed off from outsiders, where internal deviancy is frowned on, and where cooperation becomes more important than depth.[14] Also, sensitivity groups demonstrate a cultural trait that is defensive and hostile to individual independence. The ultimate evils in sensitivity training are the radical stance or the act of walking out of the group.

Human development is cognitive as well as affective and psychomotor. If Piaget is to be believed, along with the derivative theses of Bruner, Olver and Greenfield,[15] then the cognitive may be the key to the capacity of individuals to experience the world. Bruner, following Piaget, shows empirically that as children develop, they proceed through three grossly successive, but overlapping, stages. The first is an enactive stage in which the meaning of things is mediated primarily by sensory-motor processes, often largely kinesthetic. The child learns by touching, feeling, handling. Things are as they feel. The child then moves into an ikonic stage which is perceptual-imagic in nature. Now the child begins to understand through the use of perceptual imagery in any sensory mode. He imagines how things feel, how they smell, or how they look. And he problem-solves by manipulating images of things rather than by dealing tactually or sensorially with the

things themselves. A third stage, which apparently begins around age seven in Western society, is symbolic. The child begins to use symbols to stand for things, and to understand by manipulating symbols, largely words and numbers.

As adults we are not only what we have felt and feel, what we have imagined and now imagine, but also what symbols we have learned to manipulate and the way in which we presently manipulate them. We develop, therefore, in terms of what we know personally via our senses, what we imagine or perceive, and the symbols we use to stand for things and processes. If we can believe Leavitt and Doktor,[16] a T-group which is primarily enactive will probably create anxiety for a symbolic person and so for an ikonically oriented group in which an enactive or symbolic person finds himself or herself, and so on.

Thus, before even discussing the problems of cultural cohesion and ideological consensus as normative arrangements in sensitivity training, it becomes obvious that the orientation of the leader of the group or the general tendency of a particular group, i.e., enactive, ikonic or symbolic, forms the standard by which the individuals in the group will be judged. In particular, referring again to Leavitt and Doktor,[17] it seems "nonsensical" to argue that a man is too symbolic. As they point out, man's wondrous capacity to symbolize and his exploitation of it through science and literature have made man more human, not less human as the enactive, "feel-oriented" types, like Tannenbaum[18] imply. To be able to translate from one mode to another is perhaps the optimum: "when we can do a much less halting job of saying what we feel, or feeling what others say, or visualizing mathematics, or verbalizing dancing . . ."

To understand the human process, we must see clearly that human development is not a process involving one mode of being--or else we would all be dancers, or mathematicians, or philosophers and what a limited, one-way world until, of course, we all starved for lack of others doing something different.

With respect to sensitivity arrangements, it is one thing in a one-to-one relationship to make no claim to reality and only provide our judgment, and quite another where the individual is offered the judgment in public, in front of the group where the judgment, thereby, becomes a group judgment. It requires great strength of purpose and intellectual or emotional clarity to maintain a position against such an onslaught. An enactive type might readily become self-doubtful before a symbolic-oriented group, or vice-versa. So much depends on strength of purpose and clarity of intellect and emotion.

As is well known from psychological research by Rosenthal[19] and Friedman,[20] the most important variable in an educational experience is the variable of what the experimenter expects to happen. Expectations for behavior have a strong influence on what kind of behavior is expressed. Edgar Lee Masters, a great American poet, realized and wrote about the importance of expectations for behavior in a superb poem entitled "Aner Clute" (1914):

> "....."
> "Suppose a boy steals an apple
> "From a tray at a grocery store,
> "And they all begin to call him a thief,
> "The editor, minister, judge, and all the people--
> "'A thief,' 'a thief,' 'a thief,' wherever he goes,
> "And he can't get work, and he can't get bread
> "Without stealing it, why the boy will steal.
> "It's the way the people regard the theft of the apple
> "That makes the boy what he is."[21]

Haimowitz echoes the same idea in his chapter "Criminals are Made, not Born."[22]

The enactive, the kinetic or the symbolic tools that are most used by a person with respect to his or her identity and life-style may not be developed or strongly ingrained to withstand the subtle, bu sometimes brutal, verbal efforts to bring about conformity to a group standa d. Since the group speaks through individuals, a deviant or different type individual may find himself immobilized into paralysis and collusion. This is the consensus that arises out of the fear of being distinct. Closeness, warmth, and so on become norms

as powerful and restraining as the anxieties of rejection and destruction. Love, warmth, expression of feelings may become a new kind of superego, compulsively adhered to.

It should be obvious at this point that, although I do not mean to idealize, I have come to revere the deviant mode, the radical stance, what Peter Viereck[23] came to think of as a new hero for modern America: "the unadjusted man."

In summation, I find sensitivity training highly effective but I also see it as 1) an instrument mainly for adaptive, adjustive re-socialization and social integration; 2) an educational tool which promotes personal reconstruction but not with a view to social reconstruction; and 3) as a value-medium which operates to discourage the intellectual, symbolic mode and to disapprove independence regarding task-orientation. Consequently, I conclude that sensitivity training needs to review its own purposes and direction in a society aimed toward control, manipulation, ideological confusion and loss of what Wheelis refers to as "eternal verities."

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